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CIA Planned, Paid for Invasion, Cuban Says Here

Men Were Trained in Guatemala, By U. S. Agency, Ex-Fighter Asserts

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Guillermo Hernandez Cartaya has worked for and fought against Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

He was a leader in the Bay of Pigs invasion in April, 1961. For his efforts, he spent 19 months in Cuban prisons, including seven on the Isle of Pines.

He had helped raise money to bring Castro to power.

Hernandez is in Philadelphia now with his wife, Virginia, 26, who represented Cuba as a swimmer in the 1952 Olympic Games, and Virginia, six, the older of their two daughters.

He's going back to Miami the end of this month to confer with the other leaders of Brigade 2506 on what will become of their organization and its hopes to overthrow Castro.

Both Sides of Fence

Hernandez lives in a four-room apartment at 6012 Drexel road in Oxerbrook. He sat in the living room yesterday and talked about his six years as a revolutionary on both sides of Castro's fence.

"When Castro began his revolutionary activities in the Sierra Maestra in 1956," said Hernandez in his precise English, "I was one of his underground workers in Havana.

"I was vice president of the Gerente Banco De Los Colonos, a prosperous bank that did a great deal of business with sugar plantation owners.

"From people in Havana, I collected a lot of money to help finance Castro's 26th of July movement."

In Charge of Bank

When the movement rolled triumphantly into Havana in January, 1959, Castro asked Hernandez to take charge of the Cuban bank that administers social security.

Hernandez declined. Approved For Release 2003/12/02

sure that I liked the people advising Castro," he said.

Six months after Castro's rise to the Cuban premiership, he began to rely heavily on Communist advisers and to destroy all elements of democracy, Hernandez said.

"I began again as a revolutionary. This time I collected money for the Revolutionary Recuperation Movement, an exile group that was to become the Cuban Revolutionary Council.

Picked Up By Police

"Castro's secret police arrested me and warned me to stop my work as treasurer of that movement. I fled Cuba in June, 1960."

Hernandez said he worked for the Revolutionary Council in Miami for a time, lining up Cubans to form a military invasion force.

Then he moved to Philadelphia and became credit manager of the Highway Asphalt Co., of Bridgeport.

"On the first or second of April, 1961," Hernandez recalled, "I was ordered to report to Guatemala for training as an automatic rifleman in Brigade 2506.

"I had five days of training; some men had only one day. We were flown to Nicaragua."

Trained, Financed by CIA

Hernandez was asked what role U. S. military men or Central Intelligence Agency officials played at the training site.

He said, "The CIA planned, directed and paid for the invasion."

Hernandez said the 3,000 or so invaders were put onto converted cargo ships.

"We called them banana boats. The lower part of the ships were filled with high octane gasoline. Above that was piled ammunition. We were on the top deck.

smoke. Approved For Release 2003/12/02

Five-Day Trip

"It took five days from Nicaragua to Cuba. In the morning we were given coffee to drink; we had white beans for lunch, and more coffee in the evening. We were hungry by the time we reached Cuba.

"We were told that airplanes would bomb the two main roads leading to the Bay of Pigs. Castro's militiamen would not be able to get through.

"The whole area is one big swamp and the only way you can get there by land is over the two highways. The Bay of Pigs was chosen as the invasion site because we felt it could not be defended.

It Was Rocky

Aerial photographs and intelligence information showed that the beach at the Bay of Pigs was sandy. When we arrived we discovered it was rocky and there were big rocks under the water which made landing very difficult.

"I was in the 6th battalion and we were on the Rio Escondido. We sat for a day and waited for the order to climb into landing barges. Then Castro's planes began to fly over. They strafed us with machine-gun fire.

"We got the order to board the landing barges. We were not far from our ship when it was hit by a bomb. In five minutes the fire had reached the ammunition and gasoline and our ship exploded and sank.

200 Men Killed

"The only equipment and ammunition we had was what was on our backs.

"A bomb hit the Houston and almost the entire 5th battalion of 200 men was killed.

"Some men jumped overboard and were drowned or attacked by sharks.

"The fighting started as soon as we hit the beach at Playa Larga. We were welcomed there by Castro's militiamen.

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